



ENCOUNTERS

Design: Cindy Bouwers

Sunday,
March 15, 1987
Convocation Hall

8:00 p.m.

The Department of Music
presents

ENCOUNTERS IV

The Fourth in a Series of
Four Concerts

Artistic Directors:
Leonard Ratzlaff
Malcolm Forsyth

Programme:

Wanderer Fantasy in C,
D. 760 (1822)
Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

Allegro con fuoco non troppo
Adagio
Presto
Allegro

Helmut Brauss, piano

Cry Wolf (1980)
Alfred Fisher
(b. 1942)

Harold Wiens, baritone
Grant Cahoon, flute
Michael Bowie, viola
Mark Eeles, cello

PROGRAMME NOTES

Fantasie Op.15 (D.760) in C-major
(Wanderer Fantasy)

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

Written in 1822, this work seems rather prophetic for Schubert's time and is certainly unique in his own piano oeuvre. A cyclical, highly unified masterpiece of 4 interlocked movements, based on a rhythmic motive derived from his own song "Der Wanderer", this fantasy illustrates the most important aspects of Schubert's writing: the intense melodic quality as found in his songs, the intimate style of the small ensemble, as seen in his chamber music, and the large orchestral forces as displayed, for instance, in his C Major Symphony.

The resources of the piano are explored in a way pointing to the forthcoming techniques of the great romantic composers, who increasingly used large sonorities, dense chordal structures, doubling of melodic lines, virtuosic figurations like broken octaves or chords, arpeggios, scales encompassing the whole range of the keyboard and various "romantic sound patterns" such as tremolando.

These "pianistic" aspects are not a means in themselves and as such should not be compared with the procedures later used by Franz Liszt, although one might be tempted to do so. However, formal characteristics, such as the way the four movements are integrated into a "Gesamtkunstwerk", definitely point to Liszt and in particular to his B Minor Sonata. A quasi-Lisztian metamorphosis of the main rhythmic motive beginning with the dramatic version (1st movt.), moving via an ingenious transition to the lyrical (2nd movt.), appearing in strong contrast as a dance character (3rd movt.) and finally evolving into an assertive fugal theme in the last movement unifies the whole work, at the same time emphasizing the principle of continuous contrast, even on a very subtle level, as the transformation of the rhythm from the "dactylus" of the first theme to the "anapest" of the second in the first movement shows.

Unfortunately this great work of music has become more and more a show piece for pianists and is interpreted accordingly, the main criterium of success being often the lowest percentage of wrong notes played. However, the only rationale for performing the Wanderer Fantasy can be its unique musical and poetic message.

(Helmut Brauss)

Cry Wolf

Alfred Fisher
(b. 1942)

I first heard this Cree tale the "right way" - hunkering around a campfire in the snowy bush of Northern Saskatchewan. In this rollicking, humorous tale, the traditional Cree prankster-figure, Weesakachuk, is cast as a greedy character bent on outwitting the wolves. (In an interesting inversion of European mythology, the wolves here are of spotless character and motive). But greed is not easily tolerated in this tradition and the tale follows the prankster through his misbegotten scheme to an outrageous conclusion. It's funny but, as in all such tales, there is an instructive dimension to its purpose inherent in its non-dogmatic, anti-pedantic approach to the perils of greed. It is this essential virtue of the text that conditions the music in both substance and style.

(Alfred Fisher)

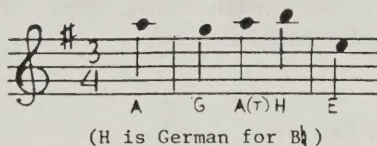
Sextet in G Major

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Brahms's Sextet No. 2 in G. Major, Op. 36, was composed in 1864-65 near the end of a five- or six-year period that saw the completion of several important pieces of chamber music, including the great F Minor Piano Quintet. These are works in which Brahms's mature personal style was being forged and perfected. Compared with Brahms's earlier works, there is a greater emphasis on counterpoint and a more thorough and compelling use of thematic and motivic development--interrelated techniques essential to the creation of great chamber music. At the same time there is an increased interest in harmonic experimentation. But as is nearly always the case, lyrical melodic material is at the core. That is particularly true in the G Major Sextet.

Sextet in G Major (continued)

The first movement, in Brahms's favorite triple meter, focuses on the main theme's opening five notes (a linked pair of ascending fifths), that were designed for extensive development. This motive is passed from instrument to instrument and often appears in inverted form. Other motivic or thematic elements include the very persistent alternating note figure heard at the outset in the viola, the lyrical dancing tune of the second theme, and a quick, but repetitive, reference to a motive representing Agathe von Siebold, a singer and the only woman to whom Brahms became engaged. The engagement was broken a few years earlier, but Brahms noted to a friend that "here [in the sextet] I have freed myself from my last love." Her theme is based on the musical notes contained in her name:



The second movement is a new Brahmsian scherzo in 2/4 time in the tonic minor. The theme is based on a Gavotte Brahms had composed for piano several years earlier, and the Baroque-like ornaments create interesting accents on the weak beats. The trio is a fast rustic triple meter dance in the parallel major and involves in its second half a soft transformation of its opening theme, which had originally been strongly syncopated.

The e minor slow movement consists of a theme with five variations and coda over an extended pedal point. The expressive "vocal" melody, rich contrapuntal texture, and variation form create the contemplative mood so characteristic of Beethoven's late quartets. The unusual 12-measure theme is intensified by its rich chromatic harmony with unexpected tonal shifts. The finale is a sonata structure with rondo elements, as the opening animated material returns throughout the movement and forms the basis of a fugal section at the beginning of the development.

(Michael Roeder)

Acknowledgements

Payment of artist's fees for the ENCOUNTERS series is made possible by donations from the Emil Skarin Fund Committee and the Alma Mater Fund Allocations Committee at the University of Alberta.

Encounters Series 1987-88

Preparations are underway for the next Encounters series to take place beginning next fall. An exciting collection of works is being assembled under the organization of artistic director Dr. Leonard Ratzlaff. Further information will be forthcoming when the schedules, performers and the programs are confirmed.

Donations

If you have enjoyed this evening's program and wish to contribute to the continuation of the ENCOUNTERS series, donation forms are available at the door during intermission and following the concert. All donations should be directed to the Department of Music in support of the Encounters music series. All contributions qualify for a matching grant from the Provincial Government and income tax receipts will be issued by the University for all donations over \$10.00.

Arts Building Renovations

Some inconveniences have arisen caused by the renovations of the Old Arts Building. Until further notice, wheelchair access and washroom facilities are unavailable in the Arts Building. Washrooms can be found in the Business Building located a short distance north east of the hall and also in Rutherford Library, just south east of the Arts Building.

INTERMISSION (15 minute duration)

Sextet No. 2 in G
Opus 36 (1865)
Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

- I. Allegro non troppo
- II. Scherzo: Allegro non troppo
- Presto giocoso
- III. Adagio
- IV. Poco allegro

Norman Nelson, violin
Siludette O'Connor, violin
Michael Bowie, viola
Nicholas Pulos, viola
Tanya Prochazka, cello
Barbara Morris, cello

Technical production by Garth Hobden

